



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Leavening Influence of Hypocrisy (Luke 12:1-12)

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As Jesus draws close to Jerusalem we find the intensity level growing in his ministry. This escalation of conflict will not be limited to Jesus and the religious leaders, but will begin to spill over to his followers as well. There will be moments when they will be tempted to: fear man, disown Jesus, and be filled with anxiety when dragged before the rulers and authorities. He not only warns them of hardships that await them, but sets about preparing them for this reality.

In the previous chapter we saw an example of this conflict when Jesus drives out a mute demon. The response to this display of divine power was varied among those gathered. On one end of the spectrum there were those who were amazed, while others accused Jesus of being in league with the prince of demons. In addressing this accusation made against him he clarifies what this means. If he casts out this demon by the finger of God this demonstrates that the long hoped-for kingdom of God had arrived in the person and work of Jesus. The promised King was in their midst, and to miss him was to miss the accessibility of God's reign and rule.

Luke closes out these conflict accounts with Jesus leveling a litany of charges against the Pharisees and teachers of the law. All these point to Jesus' initial assessment when he was condemned by a Pharisee because he did not engage in the act of ritual cleansing before dinner. Jesus said, these leaders only cleaned the outside of the cup and dish with no concern for the condition of the human heart. He concludes this section by condemning the teachers of the law for taking away the key of knowledge. They fail to enter God's kingdom, and also prevent others from entering. Those who should have known and pointed the way to the Messiah had become blind guides. How was it possible that these religious leaders missed seeing Jesus as the Messiah? John 5:39 says, "You diligently search the Scriptures because you think by them you have eternal life; these are the Scriptures that testify about me." The danger of becoming like the Pharisees stems from the belief that the Messiah should simply underwrite one's own aspirations. This can easily happen to anyone who seeks to co-op Jesus for their own purposes, instead of learning how to acknowledge him in all their ways.

Luke 12:1-12 – 12 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be

heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

8 "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, 9 but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11 And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

The crowds have grown too many thousands. - This is not only because of Jesus' growing fame, but also because Passover is near. This means that Jerusalem's population would swell by tens of thousands as pilgrims from all over the country come to the center of the Jewish world. They arrive to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, the most important feast of the year which commemorates God's rescue of the Jews from a wicked tyrant. God did this through a great deliverer, and established Israel as God's holy nation. These are important themes. It was not only a time of reflection on the past, but it was a time filled with hope as they looked forward to their deliverance from the current evil empire (Rome), through the coming royal deliverer (the Messiah), and their ultimate restoration as God's holy nation.

So that they were trampling one another - As Jesus witnesses the frenzy of the crowds, the lack of consideration for their fellow man and the attitude of self-centeredness in their approach to getting one's own needs met, he turns to the disciples with a warning. He tells them to beware of the hypocrisy of the current Jewish leaders. Their

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS (SESSION WEEKS) AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING
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influence has permeated the entire culture. Just as yeast had to be removed from the home as part of this Passover celebration, so, too, hypocrisy must be removed. The life of Jesus' followers must be free from this if they seek to participate in kingdom living. It is helpful for us to consider God's intentions for his chosen people. In Exodus 19:5 the Lord says to Moses that Israel shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This people who should have been a kingdom of priests, the ones who could provide access to God for a broken world had become like their rulers. They had turned God's blessing inward and the nation that should have saved others needed saving themselves.

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy - Jesus identifies the root of the Pharisees opposition to his ministry as hypocrisy. This hypocrisy is not just playacting, but a focus on the external form of righteousness with no consideration of an internal change of character. Their hypocrisy has led them to be misdirected in the fundamental understanding of God's purpose as revealed through the work of Jesus. This external focus has made it impossible for them to produce anything other than the impression of piety. This is not limited to the Pharisees, or even to the first century followers of Jesus. Anyone is subject to this trap when they close their eyes to the internal struggle of confronting the corruption within, but make the main battle simply about defeating the external forces of evil.

THE WAY OF ETERNAL LIVING

Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed - Jesus is giving us knowledge of God, and knowledge of human life. He has given his disciples divine insight into how human personality has been formed and functions. Those who seek to listen to Jesus and base the actions of their lives on his teachings will do well. Those who ignore Jesus' teachings are doomed to suffer the consequences of this short-sighted decision. Nothing will be hidden or covered up, but all will be brought to light and made known.

We experience this every day in our families, churches, and work places. Many think nothing of smiling to people when face-to-face and yet kill them with their thoughts. Jesus tells us the things we try to keep from people are not hidden, but will be revealed. For the Christ-follower this duplicity is unacceptable behavior; it is the way of the hypocrite. The Pharisee showed outward respect for Jesus, but inwardly they were analyzing, looking for him to slip up, and were

watching with a critical eye to accuse and condemn. If we take Jesus at his word, we are forced to no longer sweep our thoughts under the rug and wonder why they expose our hearts in the most inopportune moments. We will seek to learn from Jesus, what he taught and how he lived so that behavior such as loving one's enemies and going the second mile will seem like the only sensible and happy thing to do because we are being transformed into his image in the totality of our being.

CONQUERING HYPOCRISY

Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. - The first step to combating hypocrisy in our lives is learning to fear God. When one considers fear in general, what is found is: fear restrains behavior. In the extreme, as found in a phobia, the fear of a spider will keep a person from entering the room if one is on the wall 20 feet away. In like manner, the fear of man will keep us from acting in a certain way around that individual or group. This means the fear of man can confine activity God desires; however prioritizing the fear of God will restrain behavior that is harmful to human flourishing. Coupled with this fear of God is Jesus' statement to "Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows." Because God loves us, just as any father loves and cares for his children, he places boundaries and limits because he understands what is best for us, that is, to live in harmony with him and one another. We are also reminded in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that, "Christ's love constrains us." Our response to Jesus' love, demonstrated on the cross, compels us to live not for our own self-interests, but for Jesus' sake, becoming those whose lives reflect the wonder of the gospel.

Who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge - The second step which flows naturally from the first is to acknowledge Jesus. Once life is curtailed by the fear of God, one will possess the liberty to involve Jesus in all I do. This is the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is the invitation to take our whole life into God's reign and rule, it is learning how to live this life in his power. When we undertake all our activities, we are not doing them on our own. We can do them with the confidence, vision, and expectation that we act in the spirit and character of Christ. Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it in the name of ..." What this means is that I do it on behalf of Jesus? I do it in place of him. So when I walk into a room to speak or serve, I must ask myself, "How would Jesus do this?" Then do it on his behalf. So discipleship becomes the process of learning to acknowledge God in all we do.